

GEF-8 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

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General Project Information

Project Title

Ecosystem restoration in seven national protected areas of Argentina

Region	GEF Project ID
Argentina	11490
Country(ies)	Type of Project
Argentina	FSP
GEF Agency(ies):	GEF Agency ID
CAF	CAF-GEF 041
Executing Partner	Executing Partner Type
Administration of National Parks of Argentina (APN).	Government
GEF Focal Area (s)	Submission Date
Biodiversity	12/20/2023

Project Sector (CCM Only)

Taxonomy

Focal Areas, Forest, Drylands, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Sustainable Fire Management, Ecosystem Approach, Biodiversity, Biomes, Wetlands, Temperate Forests, Grasslands, Protected Areas and Landscapes, Terrestrial Protected Areas, Climate Change, Climate Change Adaptation, Ecosystem-based Adaptation, Influencing models, Demonstrate innovative approach, Convene multi-stakeholder alliances, Strengthen institutional capacity and decision-making, Stakeholders, Beneficiaries, Local Communities, Civil Society, Non-Governmental Organization, Private Sector, SMEs, Gender Equality, Gender results areas, Knowledge Generation and Exchange, Gender Mainstreaming, Gender-sensitive indicators, Capacity, Knowledge and Research, Learning, Theory of change, Enabling Activities, Knowledge Generation, Training, Knowledge Exchange, South-South, Capacity Development

Type of Trust Fund	Project Duration (Months)
GET	48
GEF Project Grant: (a)	GEF Project Non-Grant: (b)
6,268,011.00	0.00
Agency Fee(s) Grant: (c)	Agency Fee(s) Non-Grant (d)
564,121.00	0.00
Total GEF Financing: (a+b+c+d)	Total Co-financing
6,832,132.00	43,876,075.00
PPG Amount: (e)	PPG Agency Fee(s): (f)
150,000.00	13,500.00
PPG total amount: (e+f)	Total GEF Resources: (a+b+c+d+e+f)

163,500.00

6,995,632.00

Project Tags

CBIT: No NGI: No SGP: No Innovation: No

Project Summary

Provide a brief summary description of the project, including: (i) what is the problem and issues to be addressed? (ii) what are the project objectives, and if the project is intended to be transformative, how will this be achieved? (iii), how will this be achieved (approach to deliver on objectives), and (iv) what are the GEBs and/or adaptation benefits, and other key expected results. The purpose of the summary is to provide a short, coherent summary for readers. The explanation and justification of the project should be in section B “project description”. (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

1. Argentina is a country of vast dimensions and landscapes. It is home to a great diversity of species and natural ecosystems. The country has 18 ecoregions. Fifteen of these ecoregions are terrestrial and include forests, rainforests, wetlands, arid and semi-arid steppes, grasslands, savannahs, and high mountain ecosystems. The National System of Protected Areas, which is managed by the National Parks Administration ([APN](#)), was created in 1934, currently encompass 55 protected areas and protects more than 18 million hectares (SIB, 2023).

2. The problem that the project will address is the degradation and loss of biodiversity of high conservation value in the National System of Protected Areas. To this end, the project will focus on restoration actions in seven (7) prioritised protected areas to recover the resilience and natural regeneration capacities of these sites. In turn, this will contribute to ensure the sustained provision of ecosystem services to society. The prioritised protected areas are: (i) Los Glaciares, (ii) Campos de Tuyú, (iii) Los Cardones, (iv) Tierra del Fuego, (v) Iberá and (vi) Lihué Calel National Parks and the Laguna de Los Pozuelos Natural Monument. Four (4) root causes and five (5) barriers have been identified that hinder effective restoration interventions in this territory.

3. The project objective is “to reduce ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss in seven selected protected areas and their buffer zones, to contribute to the recovery of their integrity, connectivity, and ecological resilience, in strategic alliance with key stakeholders”. The project is organised into four components, five outcomes and 23 outputs to help address the barriers that limit the progressive recovery of the conservation values of these protected spaces.

4. The project will implement four components:
 - (1) Strengthen the governance of ecological restoration processes in protected areas and their buffer zones.
 - (2) Implement demonstration interventions on ecological restoration.
 - (3) Generate communication inputs and disseminate knowledge on ecological restoration.
 - (4) Monitor and evaluate project execution.

Indicative Project Overview

Project Objective

To reduce ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss in seven selected protected areas and their buffer zones, to contribute to the recovery of their integrity, connectivity, and ecological resilience, in strategic alliance with key stakeholders.

Project Components

Component 1: Strengthen the governance of ecological restoration processes in protected areas and their buffer zones.

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
157,000.00	1,099,000.00

Outcome:

Outcome 1.1: Improved enabling conditions for successful ecological restoration.

Output:

Output 1.1.1: Guidelines for the diagnosis, planning, and institutional monitoring of ecological restoration processes in protected areas and their buffer zones.

Output 1.1.2: Ecological restoration programme established within the National Parks Administration of Argentina

Output 1.1.3: Sustainable financing mechanism for the ecological restoration processes of the prioritised protected areas

Output 1.1.4: Seven local advisory committees and/or participation spaces in place and strengthened.

Output 1.1.5: Seven instances of interjurisdictional coordination for ecological restoration actions in place

Component 2: Implement demonstration interventions of ecological restoration.

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
5,207,000.00	36,449,000.00

Outcome:

Outcome 2.1: Gradual recovery of conservation values that have been degraded by the presence of invasive alien species in six protected areas and their buffer zones

Outcome 2.2: Strengthened capacities for ecological fire management and wildfire prevention in the Campos del Tuyú, Iberá and Lihué Calel National Parks

Output:

Output 2.1.1: Scientific baseline (extent, type, degree, and location) of degraded ecosystems and the factors driving their deterioration

Output 2.1.2: Three plans for the prevention, monitoring, and control of invasive alien species in the National Parks and buffer zones of Iberá (preparation and implementation), Los Glaciares and Campos del Tuyú (implementation).

Output 2.1.3: Three information and awareness campaigns on invasive alien species in Los Glaciares, Campos del Tuyú and Iberá National Parks

Output 2.1.4: A system for monitoring and evaluating the recovery of degraded areas and affected populations of native flora and fauna in seven protected areas implemented

Output 2.1.5: Six collaborative livestock management plans (cattle, horses, sheep) and feral livestock control implemented in selected protected areas and buffer zones.

Output 2.2.1: Three collaborative plans developed and/or implemented for ecological fire management and fire prevention

Output 2.2.2: Three information and awareness campaigns on ecological fire management and fire prevention

Output 2.2.3: Three collaborative wildfire prevention systems (Campos del Tuyú, Iberá and Lihué Calel), and early warning systems and prescribed burns (Iberá).

Output 2.2.4: Three monitoring and recovery plans for degraded areas and fauna and flora populations affected by wildfires

Component 3: Generate, communicate, and disseminate knowledge on sustainable ecological restoration.

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
475,000.00	3,325,000.00

Outcome:

Outcome 3.1: Strengthened knowledge management, awareness, and communication on ecological restoration in protected areas and their buffer zones in Argentina

Output:

Output 3.1.1: Inclusive communication and awareness strategy for specific groups and sites, with the involvement and commitment of key stakeholders from the seven selected protected areas

Output 3.1.2: Lessons learned and good practices documented and disseminated, nationally and internationally

Output 3.1.3: Four knowledge sharing events on best practices and lessons learned

Output 3.1.4: A knowledge management module on ecological restoration hosted in the APN Biodiversity Information System

Output 3.1.5: Four capacity building and training processes in ecological restoration methods and techniques

M&E

Component Type	Trust Fund
Technical Assistance	GET
GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
130,534.00	913,738.00

Outcome:

Outcome 4.1: Effective project-level monitoring and evaluation in accordance with GEF requirements.

Output:

Output 4.1.1: Project initiation workshop and report (inception workshop).

Output 4.1.2: Annual GEF Project Implementation Review (PIR), Board meeting reports and monitoring of key GEF indicators, Gender Action Plan, Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Environmental and Social management Framework

Output 4.1.3: Independent Mid-Term Review

Output 4.1.4: Independent Terminal Evaluation.

Component Balances

Project Components	GEF Project Financing (\$)	Co-financing (\$)
Component 1: Strengthen the governance of ecological restoration processes in protected areas and their buffer zones.	157,000.00	1,099,000.00
Component 2: Implement demonstration interventions of ecological restoration.	5,207,000.00	36,449,000.00
Component 3: Generate, communicate, and disseminate knowledge on sustainable ecological restoration.	475,000.00	3,325,000.00
M&E	130,534.00	913,738.00
Subtotal	5,969,534.00	41,786,738.00
Project Management Cost	298,477.00	2,089,337.00
Total Project Cost (\$)	6,268,011.00	43,876,075.00

Please provide justification

PROJECT OUTLINE

A. PROJECT RATIONALE

Briefly describe the current situation: the global environmental problems and/or climate vulnerabilities that the project will address, the key elements of the system, and underlying drivers of environmental change in the project context, such as population growth, economic development, climate change, sociocultural and political factors, including conflicts, or technological changes. Describe the objective of the project, and the justification for it. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

Global and regional importance for people and nature.

1. Argentina is a country of vast dimensions and landscapes. It is home to a great diversity of species and natural ecosystems. In terms of surface, it is the eighth largest country in the world (2.8 million km² of land and 1.6 million km² of Argentine continental sea^[11]). Given its latitudinal amplitude (greater than 30 degrees and with an extension of 3,694 km from south to north), it has a wide range of climates from subpolar to tropical (MAyDS, 2020a). Eighteen ecoregions have been identified, 15 of which are terrestrial (Burkart et al., 1999), including forests and rainforests, wetlands, arid and semi-arid steppes, grasslands, savannahs, and high mountain ecosystems (SAyDS, 2019a). The rich biodiversity is reflected in the large number of species identified in the country: more than 11 thousand plant taxa, more than three thousand species of vertebrates and nearly 111 thousand species of arthropods (SAyDS, 2019b).
2. Argentina was one of the first countries to create protected areas in South America. In 1903, the first lands were donated for protection in the Patagonia, and they were formally declared a National Park in 1922. In 1934, the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) was created, which is managed by the Administration of National Parks (APN; Law 22,351). Currently, the APN manages 55 protected areas and safeguard more than 18 million hectares (SIB, 2023), equivalent to 1.8% of the country's land surface and 8.3% of the continental Argentine Sea. Just as APN is the authority for protected areas in areas of national jurisdiction, given the federal regime of the Argentine Republic, the provinces own their natural resources and have their own protection systems. In 2023, the National System of Protected Areas (SIFAP, includes national and provincial jurisdictions) comprised 559 protected areas covering a total area of 44,974,504 hectares (16.17% of the continental national territory; SIFAP, 2023).
3. The huemul (*Hippocamelus bisulcus*) is the southernmost cervid in the world and is endemic to Patagonia in Argentina and Chile. In Los Glaciares National Park and its surroundings there is a relatively healthy population of huemul that is important for the conservation of the species in the country. This species has been declared a National Natural Monument (Law 24,702/96), the maximum protection that can be granted to a species in Argentina and which defines APN as the institution responsible for the different actions aimed at improving its conservation status. It has been categorized as “*Endangered*” at the international level (IUCN Red List, Black-Decima et al., 2023) and at national level (MAyDS Resolution 316/2021, Pastore & Aprile, 2019). The huemul has been included in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and in Appendix I of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). Also, the huemul is a transboundary species that moves between Chile and Argentina. IUCN estimates that there are between 1,048 and 1,500 mature individuals. The huemul has negative interactions with feral cattle and domestic

livestock, including the fragmentation of populations due to avoidance or interference and the transmission of diseases.

4. In the Iberá National Park, the wildfires which occurred between January and March 2022 affected 47% of the surface of the protected area (91,174 hectares), causing the direct death and displacement of the native fauna that is the main conservation target (Saucedo et al., 2023). Preliminary results indicated that about 172,784 vertebrates could have died from the wildfire. The most affected mammals were capybaras, armadillos, and rodents. Amphibians and reptiles were among the most impacted vertebrates due to their limitations to escape the fire. Threatened species of birds (Saffron-cowled Blackbird, Strange-tailed tyrant, Black-and-white monjita) and larger mammals (marsh deer, maned wolf, pampas deer) could have moved to new shelters with availability of water and food (Zurano et al., 2022; Telam, 2023).
5. Protected areas in Argentina are an important driver for the tourism sector and the country economy, attracting both national and foreign tourists, and creating jobs and development opportunities throughout the country (SAyDS, [2019a](#)). In Argentina, the tourism sector^[212] represents 9% of the national GDP and 6% of total employment with more than one million jobs. It is a dynamic activity which is present in all regions, made up of more than 51,000 formal companies that provide tourism services, mostly micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. It is the fourth export sector in the country, after food, automotive products and knowledge-based services (MTyD, [2022](#)). A part of this sector is dedicated to nature tourism^[213].

Threats to terrestrial biodiversity.

6. Anthropogenic activities are the main drivers of biodiversity loss, such as land use change, the expansion of the agricultural frontier, livestock farming, pollution, among others (IPBES, 2018). Invasive alien species (IAS) are the second cause of biodiversity loss globally, only surpassed by the alteration of natural environments. IAS are one of the most significant degradation factors within protected areas (APN, [2008](#)). In Argentina, IAS have been introduced by forestry and agricultural production, aquaculture, commercial and tourism transportation, pet breeding or ornamental purposes. As of 2018, there were 723 introduced species of plants, vertebrates, invertebrates, algae and fungi in all the ecoregions of the country^[414] (SAyDS, [2019b](#)). Part of the alien fauna includes feral domestic animals, such as feral cattle and horses, donkeys, wild boars, and dogs (SNIEEI, [2023](#)). These animals not only degrade ecosystems, but due to their aggressiveness they also constitute a risk to human safety.
7. Globally, the damage caused by biological invasions reaches 1.4 trillion dollars, which each year represents approximately 5% of the world's gross product. In Argentina, only the impact of the wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) in rural areas, including protected areas, represents an annual cost of between 907 and 1,380

million dollars^{[5]5} (MAyDS, [2022](#)). Ecological restoration strategies integrate aspects of IAS control or eradication as fundamental actions for the recovery of ecosystems.

8. Virtually all the wild flora and fauna species considered vulnerable within the Argentine territory register one or more invasive alien species among their main threats. The evidence shows that wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) populations have a negative effect on the survival of the pampas deer (*Ozotoceros bezoarticus*) in the Buenos Aires Province (MAyDS, 2022). This cervid is a conservation target of the Campos del Tuyú National Park and is *Endangered* according to the national categorisation (Merino et al., [2019](#)). In Argentina there are four subpopulations, and the Campos del Tuyú National Park protects one of them. The population of the pampas deer declined in the last 35 years. In the 1980s, 300±64 individuals were counted, while in 2013 a population size of 149±48 individuals was estimated (Pérez Carusi et al., [2017](#)). It has been shown that the wild boar affects its spatial distribution, possibly predated on the offspring (APN, 2018).
9. Wildfire is a natural disturbance that has shaped the composition and structure of grassland environments for more than 300 million years. Humans have conducted burns for many millennia to improve habitat for animals and livestock (Neary & McMichael, 2020). In Argentina, fire is used by livestock producers in various ecosystems of grasslands, savannahs, and open forests to promote the regrowth of palatable species for the livestock. In turn, APN develops fire management plans and prescribed burns to (i) reduce the load of plant fuel in protected areas, (ii) prevent the spread of wildfires, and (iii) restore this natural disturbance (SAyDS, [2019a](#))^{[6]6}. When fires -initiated by natural or accidental causes- spread over large areas and have high intensities, they become a threat to people safety and the local economies.
10. In Argentina, wildfires occur every year between the end of winter and the end of summer (some as accidents from controlled burns, due to other intentional or accidental causes, or due to natural causes such as lightning strikes). In the Andean-Patagonian and Monte and Spinal Forest regions (Caldén district), forest wildfires were the main cause of native forests transformation. Central and southern Argentina have experienced serious episodes of forest fires during the last few years. Between 1998 and 2017, the total area of native forest affected by wildfires was 6,062,712 ha and the annual average for the period was 303,136 ha (MAyDS, [2020](#)). In dry years, the incidence and scope of fires is even broader.
11. In the Lihué Calel National Park, the vegetation cover has spatial and temporal dynamics associated with wildfire events. After two extensive and high-intensity fires in 2003 and 2018, regrowth of shrub species was larger than herbaceous species and the few surviving trees were unable to expand their coverage with new sprouts. The Park protects caldenal forests (*Prosopis caldenia*, an endemic species), an ingression of the Espinal ecoregion into the protected area (APN, 2022). Caldenal forests, towards the southwest of the Espinal ecoregion, have suffered a 20% reduction in the last 20 years. The remaining forests of the region have been fragmented in different ways and intensities due to the advance of the

agricultural frontier and other agents of transformation (SAyDS, 2007). Although the representation of the caldenal is limited in the park, these communities contribute to increasing the structural complexity of the landscape by providing habitat for fauna. Currently, these forests are heavily affected by recurrent wildfires, which have led to almost the total loss of adult individuals of arboreal types. The only good condition remnant persists in the operational area, where the intensive public use zone is located. Adult specimens of caldenal affected by highly intense wildfires in different sites show copious basal regrowth but do not recover their tree shape and persist within areas with abundant bush cover (APN, 2022).

12. Domestic livestock that enter protected areas without controlled management can cause serious conservation problems by degrading the natural environments. In some rural areas, extensive livestock management is commonly implemented. The transit of livestock in protected areas has an impact on the soil (compaction), water (pollution), vegetation (foraging, degradation) and on other species of native fauna (they are scared away, compete for space and food, favour the introduction and transmission of diseases, produce unfavourable changes in genetics due to hybridization and cause modifications in ecosystem structure). In private grassland areas located around protected areas, land zoning management has made it possible to generate forage habitat for endangered species, to reduce competition with livestock and to develop conservation corridors beyond the protected units (e.g., Rodríguez et al., [2016](#)).
13. In Los Cardones National Park, the Andean highland wetlands (vegas) face erosive processes due to grazing and use by large and small livestock. These ecosystems are a source of high biodiversity in the high Andean floor and it is a conditioning environment for its drainage towards the subsequent puneños and monte-prepuneños floors. The vegas contain extremely fragile communities made up of highly specialised species. Transhumance grazing practices have been carried out in the vegas ecosystems for at least 100 years. In the past 25 years, vegas wetlands have received a permanent overload, which has caused (i) degradation and loss of floristic diversity, (ii) destruction of the peripheral plant layer, (iii) fragmentation, (iv) soil compaction, and (v) reduction of the wetland area due to colonisation of the degraded space by permanent woody plants.

Baseline scenario without and with the GEF project intervention

14. Restoration efforts will focus on a set of protected areas which have been prioritised due to the types of threats and the feasibility of applying prevention, management, and control strategies. The learnings from these interventions will be key for application in the entire national system. The Campos del Tuyú and Iberá National Parks, located in the central east and northeast of the country, both in grassland, savannah, and wetland ecosystems with forest patches, are affected by similar threats. In the former, the pampas deer (*Ozotoceros bezoarticus*) (categorized as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List^[71] and as Endangered (EN) at the national level, MAyDS Resolution 316/2021^[8], Merino et al., 2019) is threatened by competition with invasive alien species such as the wild boar and inadequate livestock practices in the properties neighbouring the protected area, which decrease the total foraging habitat area. In the Iberá National Park, the xeric and hygrophilous forests are affected by inadequate livestock practices, wildfires,

and fragmentation due to different land uses, as well as by the presence of alien or invasive mammals like the wild boar and the axis deer (*Axis axis*) (Cirignoli, 2010).

15. The Lihué Calel National Park, located in south-central Argentina, is dominated by an arid ecosystem of “jarillal” or scrubland (the most conspicuous species is *Larrea divaricata*), with islets of caldenes and carob trees. Pressures on biodiversity are associated with hunting and trapping (poaching, baiting, and catching), illegal wildlife trade for pets (e.g., Chaco tortoise, yellow cardinal). Additional pressures are landscape fragmentation, interaction with productive activities, and high intensity and recurrence of wildfires. These have negative impacts on threatened species that are key for conservation in the area, such as the Chaco tortoise (*Chelonoidis chilensis*), the yellow cardinal (*Gubernatrix cristata*), the crowned solitary eagle (*Buteogallus coronatus*), the calden forest (*Prosopis caldenia*) and other endemic flora species (e.g., *Gaillardia cabreræ*, *Adesmia lihuelensis* and *Grindelia covasii*), among others.

16. In Los Cardones *National Park* and Laguna de los Pozuelos Natural Monument, located in the high Andean and Puna ecosystems in northwest Argentina, the wetlands provide highly important habitat for native fauna and sometimes for the domestic livestock of local residents. In the high Andean wetlands of the Cerro Malcante System in Los Cardones, natural erosive processes are intensified by livestock grazing. The importance of the Malcante plains lies not only in its morphological structure, but also in the dense network that provides water to the underground basin in a constant and regulated manner. Water subsequently emerges through fault lines or form layers when it is in contact with impermeable rocks. These functioning conditions the development of floristic communities that are of high conservation value at this National Park, such as the cardonal of *Trichocereus atacamensis* (the largest in the country) and the monospecific forest of churquis (*Prosopis ferox*) (García Mansilla et al., 1986). On the other hand, it is the source of water that allows the subsistence of the Guines Colque family settled at the foot of Cerro Malcante. The degradation of the meadows produces direct impacts on these conservation targets of the protected area. Whereas in the case of Pozuelos, the central lagoon, and the plant communities of the semi-arid puna, vegas and queñoales are impacted by overgrazing by livestock, topographic modifications by roads, erosion, desertification, and firewood extraction.

17. Los Glaciares and Tierra del Fuego National Parks are in the Patagonian Andean Forest region, in south and southwest Argentina. In both cases, a large threat to the ecosystem is posed by feral and/or private livestock (horse and cattle) and the fragmentation of the landscape due to the opening of roads and the placement of fences. In Los Glaciares, biodiversity is affected by animal grazing, browsing, and trampling of the forest associated with peatlands. Particularly affected are the guaitecas cypress (*Pilgerodendron uviferum*, *Vulnerable* according to the IUCN Red List) and native fauna species such as the huemul (*Hippocamelus bisulcus*, categorized as *Endangered*, both at the National level and in the IUCN Red List). In Tierra del Fuego, the permanent presence of feral and domestic horses in the protected area modifies the floristic composition and hinders the natural regeneration of woody species, directly impacting the *Nothofagus* forest.

18. Currently there is no comprehensive ecosystem restoration strategy for Argentina's protected areas. The APN began a thorough work with alien species in 2006, which led to the design of an *Invasive Alien Species Institutional Policy* in [2008](#). More recently, the APN supported the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MAyDS) in the preparation of the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species ([2022](#)), a process that was associated with investments around some prioritised species and sites. Relatively continuous management and control of IAS has been implemented at some protected areas,

but investments for a complete or permanent approach are scarce, mainly due to fluctuations of the budget of protected areas system. A few years ago, a process of repopulating species (rewilding) began in some new National Parks and some historical fauna species have been re-established (e.g., jaguar - *Panthera onca* -, large anteater - *Myrmecophaga tridactyla* -). However, this work must be strengthened with a holistic ecosystem management approach that recompose the original environment as a whole.

19. This project will work on demonstrative interventions addressing the main causes of biodiversity degradation in the prioritised protected areas (Table 1). To recover natural conditions the project will focus on:
 - a. Control IAS (wild boar, feral cattle).
 - b. Implement management actions to prevent the degradation of ecosystems (soil, vegetation, and fauna) caused by wildfires, while avoiding damage to infrastructure and people's safety.
 - c. Promote, in neighbouring or private fields within the protected areas and in their buffer zones, best management practices for domestic livestock and adaptation of infrastructure in vulnerable ecosystems (such as high Andean wetlands or pampas grassland patches), to avoid degradation and allow coexistence with native species, contributing to sustainable local livelihoods.

20. The knowledge generated in the demonstration interventions will be the basis for the development of a national institutional policy on ecological restoration in protected areas to guide a long-term effort in the entire protected areas system. In addition, the project will contribute to develop capacities on ecological restoration of natural environments, which in the future will allow to continue this work beyond the duration or geographical scope of this project.

21. Through the described approach, enabling conditions will be generated to establish and sustain an effective ecological restoration programme in protected areas. The main current barrier is the lack of sustained budget support for restoration programmes in all protected areas. In addition, other limitations are: (i) the absence of a restoration institutional policy at the national level, (ii) the lack of a team with the necessary competences and power to undertake this work at the country level, (iii) limited capacities, equipment and infrastructure, (iv) dispersal of the knowledge generated in the range of projects and initiatives, and (v) limited articulation with the private sector to coordinate goals, objectives and activities in favour of the restoration of environments in the protected areas.

22. The key actors of this project are the local stakeholders, which include: (i) inhabitants and neighbours of the protected areas, (ii) indigenous communities (Laguna de los Pozuelos Natural Monument), (iii) municipal authorities and officials, (iv) tourists that visit the protected areas, and (v) local civil society organizations. Depending on each case, they may be direct and indirect beneficiaries, partners, or collaborators. The main private sector group is the tourism services sector that undertake nature-based tourism, such as guides, nature tourism companies, transportation, hospitality, and gastronomy companies, among others. In addition, provincial officials and authorities and national or international civil society organizations (CSOs) may be partners or collaborators. For example, providing training to personnel associated with the project and sharing relevant information to achieve the project's objectives.

23. The proposed project will contribute to the goals of the Bonn Challenge and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), to goal 2 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework of the

Convention on Biological Diversity, and to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, among other multilateral environmental agreements. Furthermore, it is in line with the institutional policies of the APN and the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development (General Environmental Law [25675](#), Native Forest Law [26331](#)).

24. The management effectiveness assessments of the seven protected areas through the METT tool show the need to:
- a. Strengthen the integration of monitoring (e.g., invasive alien species) in management planning.
 - b. Strengthen protection mechanisms against the use and access to natural resources in the protected areas.
 - c. Have sustainable financing to guarantee the continuity of prioritised management actions, especially those critical activities, including entrance fees charging in the areas where this payment may be symbolic.
 - d. Promote the inclusion of protected area needs or conservation values in management plans for adjacent protected spaces or at a landscape scale.
 - e. Strengthen cooperation and feedback from users of natural resources and communities present in the vicinity of the areas, including indigenous communities.
 - f. Increase staffing and training, including diverse and more resources and capabilities to guarantee control and compliance with standards in the areas under their jurisdiction.
 - g. Implement environmental education programmes.
 - h. Have sufficient equipment to implement the planning.
 - i. Increase active natural resource management programmes.
 - j. Adapt facilities for visitors and improve monitoring and evaluation of results.

^[1]This number does not include the extension of the marine platform up to 300 nm, the Argentine Antarctic Sector, the South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime spaces. Does not include the South Atlantic Islands or Antarctica.

^[2]The entire sector exceeds what is referred to as nature tourism.

^[3]For example, in 2019, 31% of international visitors carried out practices associated with nature tourism (Schenkel, E. and Bertoncello, R. (2022)).

^[4]The list of records is published in the National Information System on Invasive Exotic Species ([SNIEEI](#)).

^[5]This last estimate does not include the impact of wild boar as responsible for road accidents or its impact as a transmitter of diseases to livestock.

^[6]The National Parks Administration, as part of the system and in accordance with the provisions of the pertinent law, has established its own regulatory standards for fire management through Resolution 272/2016, which determines the mandatory nature of Fire Management Plans and Resolution 210/2006, which establishes the procedural framework for the implementation of prescribed burning for those protected areas that incorporate this type of management actions within their respective plans.

^[7]González, S., Jackson, III, JJ & Merino, ML 2016. *Ozotoceros bezoarticus*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2016: e.T15803A22160030. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2016-1.RLTS.T15803A22160030.en>. Accessed on 13 November 2023.

^[8] Source: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/resoluci%C3%B3n-316-2021-354496/texto>

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project description

This section asks for a theory of change as part of a joined-up description of the project as a whole. The project description is expected to cover the key elements of good project design in an integrated way. It is also expected to meet the GEF's policy requirements on gender, stakeholders, private sector, and knowledge management and learning (see section D). This section should be a narrative that reads like a joined-up story and not independent elements that answer the guiding questions contained in the PIF guidance document. (Approximately 3-5 pages) see guidance here

Theory of change.

1. As described in the previous section, the problem to be addressed by the project comprises two concatenated elements: (i) the progressive degradation of the conservation values of the ecosystems and biodiversity of seven selected protected areas of Argentina and (ii) the consequent loss of the resilience and natural regeneration capacities of these spaces to ensure the sustained provision of ecosystem services to society.
2. The theory of change describes the analysis of both the main causes that generate the current situation without the project, and the barriers that prevent reversing the environmental problem, that is, achieving effective ecological restoration in those degraded environments identified in the seven protected areas. In this regard, there are various types of disturbances or alterations that these protected areas and buffer zones face. The four main root causes are (Table 1):
 - a. The massive presence of invasive alien species, especially fauna, which alter natural systems, transmit diseases, and compete with native fauna, particularly with impacts on those categorised as vulnerable or endangered, causing their displacement and a decline of the population.
 - b. Feral livestock, mainly cattle and horses, pose a threat that requires special treatment due to their high impact and overcrowding in the participating protected areas. Feral livestock overgrazing causes soil compaction and erosion, and alters the natural regeneration of biodiversity in ecosystems, with irreversible consequences in some cases.
 - c. High intensity and recurrent wildfires, especially in the central region, are favoured by the accumulation of combustible biomass, in a landscape characterised by dryness and water scarcity. Prolonged periods of drought linked to the meteorological conditions and climate change generate more frequent scenarios of electrical storms, winds, and heat waves with synergistic implications on this threat.
 - d. The fragmentation of the landscape of the protected areas and their buffer zones, due to different land uses, the placement of kilometres of wire fences and the loss of the natural regeneration capacities of the ecosystems due to the incidence of the aforementioned threats.

Table 1. Root causes of ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss that have the greatest impact on the project's selected protected areas.

Prioritised protected areas	Invasive alien species	Feral and private livestock (without control)	Wildfires	Landscape fragmentation
1. Los Glaciares	x	x		x
2. Campos del Tuyú	x	x	x	x
3. Los Cardones	x	x		x
4. Tierra del Fuego		x		x
5. Iberá	x	x	x	x
6. Lihué Calel			x	
7. Laguna de los Pozuelos		x		x

1. The main barriers that limit facing these threats are:

Barrier 1: Lack of enabling conditions to develop sustained ecological restoration processes in the protected areas of the National System of Protected Areas.

2. Argentina has not developed a national institutional policy for ecological restoration in protected areas. Likewise, the institutional frameworks and regulations for ecological restoration at different jurisdictions levels (nation, province, municipality) are not articulated. The APN does not have a specific administrative unit that is responsible for issuing technical guidelines for the development of diagnostic, planning, and financing processes for interventions to repair ecosystems and degraded biodiversity. The lack of sufficient and sustainable national funds makes that only short-term restoration initiatives are developed and that these are not sustained on the long-term. On the other hand, the existing formal and informal platforms for dialogue and resolution of conflicts arising from the degradation of nature and people's livelihoods are weak.

Barrier 2: The practical and collaborative experience on ecological restoration in protected areas has not been documented, assembled and shared.

3. There is extensive experience and knowledge to confront the threats of degradation and biodiversity loss in protected areas, produced by the presence of IAS, wildfires, and landscape fragmentation. However, the previous and current initiatives are scattered in time and space, they are not coordinated, and apply diverse methodological approaches. The real magnitude of degraded habitats and the factors that trigger these threats in protected spaces have not been assessed. Comprehensive plans for the prevention, control and monitoring of IAS and wildfires adjusted to each protected area have not been developed in collaboration with the local stakeholders, who are the main affected by the destruction of their natural heritage. The development and implementation of a system for monitoring and evaluating the recovery of intervened spaces and native flora and fauna populations is pending; as well as the establishment of proper intersectoral public administration mechanisms that support collaborative processes of ecological restoration in the territory.

Barrier 3: Effective and sustained livestock management methods and tools (feral and private) have not been developed.

4. Although many protected areas have been managing livestock for decades (with different methods such as firearms, weapons, and dogs, with or without bait stations), these efforts have not been successful. These interventions have not been sustained mainly due to budget limitations and discontinuity in the implementation of the management decisions. Effective mechanisms have not been consolidated to facilitate the control of the livestock within the National Parks. Territorial livestock planning in the buffer zone is rarely connected with the management of the protected area, and frequently, livestock management is informal, and the control is insufficient to address the effect of this activity on the values of the conservation unit. Strategic alliances with the surrounding communities and livestock owners have not been strengthened for the application of the regulations and zoning of the grazing areas, nor has there been support from the affected stakeholders in the processes of area closure, removal, and temporary containment of livestock, among other management procedures.

Barrier 4: There are no updated protocols and guidelines for fire management and wildfire prevention in the context of ecological restoration processes.

5. Local networks have not been formed in the territory to carry out training and awareness events on fire and wildfire prevention, or the existing instances do not specifically address the risks of wildfires for the ecosystem integrity of protected areas. There is no integrated technological early warning system to reduce the generation and spread of wildfires and to keep fire outbreaks under control in a timely manner. Likewise, there is a lack of implementation of the approved fire management and monitoring plans. Although wildfires are inherent elements of ecological processes and many of them depend on fire, there is not enough information on the recurrence and/or intensity that prescribed burns should have, in such a way as not to affect the main values/ecosystem services of the protected areas.

Barrier 5: Knowledge and experience on ecological restoration processes are not sufficiently communicated or exchanged at the level of the system of protected areas.

6. The available information and understanding on ecological restoration are insufficient, dispersed, and not adequately documented or systematised. The opportunities for exchanging tools and information on threats, problems, and prospects for ecological restoration inside and outside protected areas are still incipient. Previous restoration experiences have not been systematised in a way that would allow learning and readjusting future intervention. The outcomes achieved are not adequately communicated and, therefore, stakeholders are not sensitised to the factors that drive ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss. Communication and awareness plans aimed at specific groups and sites in the protected areas need to be developed. There is no digital platform that facilitates access to information on ecological restoration initiatives in protected areas. Nor have training plans or learning schools been structured to (i) facilitate training, exchange of knowledge and experiences, and (ii) the dissemination of communication tools on restoration, IAS, livestock management, comprehensive management of fire and wildfires in protected areas.

7. Based on this analysis, the project proposes an intervention strategy aimed at promoting favourable conditions for coordinated planning and management between the protected area and its buffer zone (i.e., the surrounding private and public properties). In this context, it will seek to strengthen governance conditions with the participation and involvement of key institutional, social and community stakeholders, with a gender perspective that ensures the integration of women and young people in the processes of situation analysis and decision-making.
8. It will be necessary to have accurate information to enable the development of spaces for dialogue and conflict resolution. Therefore, the project will contribute to generate practical experience and knowledge on the application of actions to reduce the impact generated by invasive alien species (especially fauna), landscape fragmentation and forest wildfires.
9. According to the scenario described in the previous section, without this project, restoration interventions will continue to be isolated and intermittent, without a clear roadmap that responds to a long-term policy or strategy. The weight of responsibility for preventing and reducing the degradation of ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity will continue to fall solely on the responsibility of the APN and the municipalities of the protected areas, without the participation and involvement of key stakeholders such as indigenous communities, local populations, the private sector and local governments that are, in addition, the main affected by the fragmentation of the landscape, the action of IAS and wildfires in their territories. In this way, the impact on ecosystem services and the loss of biodiversity will continue to increase and, if timely and impactful measures are not taken, the damage could become irreversible.
10. To prevent this from happening, the project proposes developing four components:
 - a. Component 1. Strengthening the governance of ecological restoration processes in the protected areas and buffer zones. This will allow shaping appropriate spaces or environments to:
 - Address and resolve conflicts related to the causes of ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss, and the factors that enhance them.
 - Improve intersectoral coordination of preventive and corrective actions in the territory.
 - Strengthen cooperation among key stakeholders.
 - Addresses gender inequality.All this will be fundamental to confront barrier 1.
 - b. Component 2. Implement demonstration interventions to address critical issues in ecological restoration. This will allow generating practical experience, collaborative work, and replication to address barriers 2, 3 and 4.
 - c. Component 3. Generate communication inputs and dissemination of knowledge on sustainable ecological restoration. This will eliminate the barriers of limited access and participation of key stakeholders in training actions, exchanges of experiences, awareness, and dissemination to achieve broad involvement of said actors, with a gender equality focus, in the development of actions in the territory and to address barrier 5.
 - d. Component 4. This component will focus on monitoring and evaluation of project execution to comply with the requirements of the GEF.

11. The expected impact of the interventions of this project will be to recover the natural conditions of the habitats and the wild populations of the natural systems of the protected areas and the buffer zones under intervention. This will be achieved by implementing effective and integrated management, based on (i) inter-institutional cooperation, (ii) sustained investments, and (iii) the involvement of stakeholders in the application of ecological restoration options appropriate to each protected space. The theory of change diagram provides a schematic view of the environmental problem, the barriers that need to be confronted, and how they are addressed through the project components and outcomes, leading to the estimated impacts (Figure 1). The main assumptions on which the casual connections of the theory of change are based are the following:

- a. The environmental authorities from the different jurisdictional levels (nation, provinces, municipalities) are willing to cooperate and increase institutional efforts to execute joint restoration actions in their territories, with the technical support of the APN.
- b. Women, men, and youth in selected protected areas are willing to adopt prevention, restoration, and ecological monitoring practices as a mechanism to care for the conservation values that support environmental goods and services, livelihoods, and local productive systems (tourism, cattle raising).
- c. There are political and institutional commitments reflected in the availability of personnel and adequate financial resources, to:
 - Develop the enabling conditions (i.e., improved governance, planning, knowledge, and learning) in the seven selected protected areas.
 - Sustain and replicate knowledge transfer processes, inclusive and gender-sensitive governance systems, and management of human activities in protected areas and buffer zones.

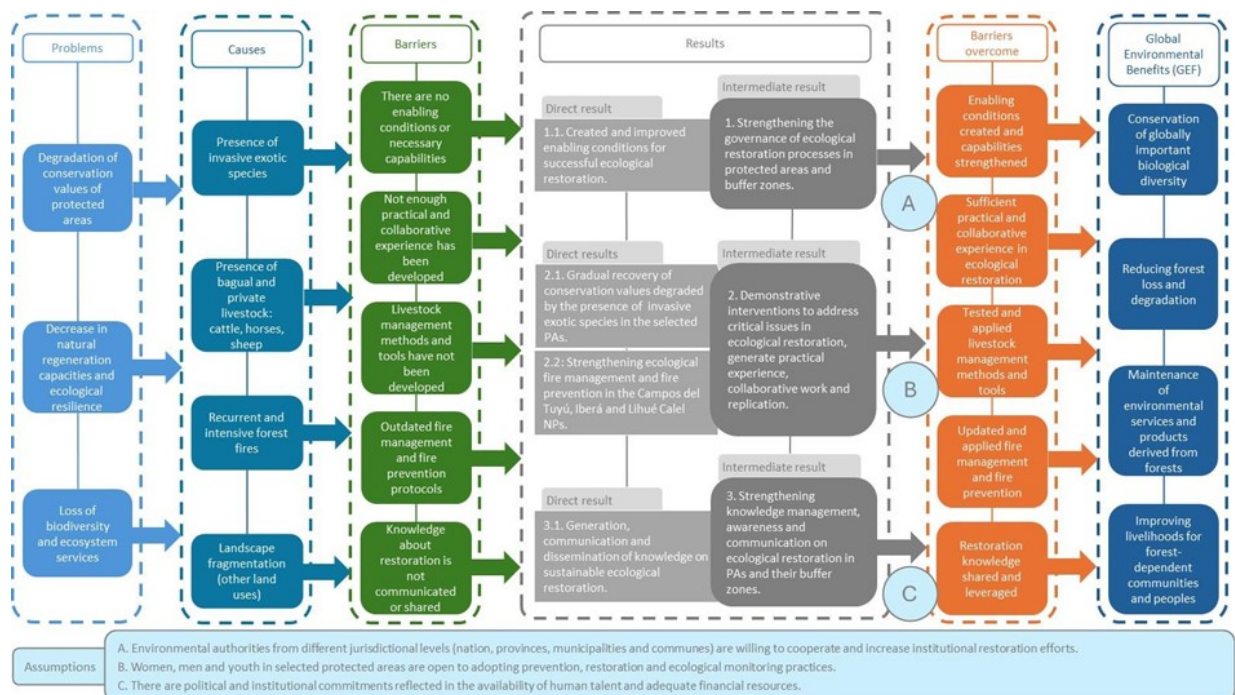


Figure 1. Theory of change of the ecological restoration project of seven protected areas in Argentina.

Expected outcomes and project components.

- The objective of the project is “to reduce the degradation of ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity in seven selected protected areas and buffer zones, to contribute to the recovery of their integrity, functionality, connectivity, and ecological resilience, in strategic alliance with key stakeholders”. The project is organised into four components, five outcomes and 23 outputs to help address the barriers that limit the progressive recovery of the conservation values of these deteriorated protected spaces (Table 2).

Table 2. Contribution of the project outcomes to address the main barriers that limit the ecological restoration of the seven selected protected areas.

Barriers that limit the recovery of the seven degraded protected areas	Project contribution to advance the ecological restoration of the seven selected protected areas
<u>Barrier 1:</u> Lack of enabling conditions to develop sustained ecological restoration processes in the protected areas of the National System of Protected Areas.	<u>Component 1:</u> Strengthen the governance of ecological restoration processes in protected areas and their buffer zones. <u>Outcome 1.1:</u> Improved enabling conditions for successful ecological restoration.
<u>Barrier 2:</u> The practical and collaborative experience on ecological restoration in protected areas has not been documented, assembled and shared. <u>Barrier 3:</u> Effective and sustained livestock management methods and tools (feral and private) have not been developed. <u>Barrier 4:</u> There are no updated protocols and guidelines for fire management and wildfire prevention in the context of ecological restoration processes.	<u>Component 2:</u> Implement demonstration intervention on ecological restoration. <u>Outcome 2.1:</u> Gradual recovery of conservation values degraded by the presence of invasive alien species in six protected areas. <u>Outcome 2.2:</u> Strengthened capacities for ecological fire management and wildfire prevention in the Campos del Tuyú, Iberá and Lihué Calel National Parks.
<u>Barrier 5:</u> Knowledge and experience on ecological restoration processes are not sufficiently communicated or exchanged at the level of the system of protected areas.	<u>Component 3:</u> Generate, communicate, and disseminate knowledge on sustainable ecological restoration. <u>Outcome 3.1:</u> Strengthened knowledge management, awareness, and communication on ecological restoration in protected areas and their buffer zones in Argentina.

- This project has been designed in response to the narrative described in the scenario without GEF intervention. With this project, the APN will lay the foundations to establish a formal body of ecosystem-based solutions in protected areas and buffer zones through the development of integrated, coordinated, and participatory processes of ecological restoration and recovery of degraded conservation values in the selected protected areas, with a solid policy and specific roadmap. The project will ensure the integration of the gender equality perspective, the participation of stakeholders and the inclusion of climate resilience in all its interventions. The scope of the project components is described below:

Component 1: Strengthen the governance of ecological restoration processes in protected areas and buffer zones.

2. This component will focus on building enabling conditions that facilitate the application of ecological restoration processes with a landscape approach in coordination with the local governments (Outcome 1.1). This will imply strengthening the institutional capacities of the APN.

Outcome 1.1: Improved enabling conditions for successful ecological restoration.

3. To achieve this outcome the project will develop five outputs. First, the project will develop strategic guidelines for the diagnosis, planning, and institutional monitoring of ecological restoration processes in protected areas and their buffer zones (output 1.1.1), in collaboration with local key stakeholders **giving particular attention to gender balance and youth participation** and under the direction of the APN. This output includes the development of technical guidelines for ecological restoration from the impacts of invasive alien species, livestock, and wildfire. These guidelines will complement the management plans of the protected areas by providing directions for: (i) the identification of degradation factors, (ii) the formulation of comprehensive intervention strategies and corrective and improvement actions which are appropriate to the condition of the area, and (iii) mechanisms for monitoring and knowledge management (e.g., scientific research and technological innovation). These guidelines will be based on former experience and the results and learning of the present project (outcome 2.1).
4. Second, the project will promote the establishment of a restoration programme or operational unit under the structure of the National Conservation Directorate of the APN (output 1.1.2). It is foreseen that this programme/unit will focus on:
 - a. Providing scientific technical criteria for ecological restoration.
 - b. Establish a roadmap to direct, coordinate and monitor ecological restoration.
5. Third, the project will support the development of sustainable financing mechanisms adjusted to the needs of the seven prioritised protected areas (Table 1) (output 1.1.3). It is expected that this financing mechanism can later be expanded to the entire National System of Protected Areas.
6. Fourth, the project will strengthen the involvement of local stakeholders in restoration initiatives (output 1.1.4). There is a growing need to build a broader and more formal government collaboration to address the current challenges of ecological restoration in Argentina's protected areas. The sustainability of the interventions of the project will depend on the long-term contribution of key stakeholders to restoration actions. Therefore, the project will promote the strengthening of the Local Advisory Committees (CAL) and/or current participation spaces, for dialogue and conflict resolution of various topics of interest related to the management of the protected area, among them, those derived from the degradation and loss of biodiversity. This contributes to mobilise key stakeholders for the analysis of information, the coordination of collaborative interventions, and the integration of gender equality and young people.
7. Finally, the project will organise instances for interjurisdictional articulation to support ecological restoration initiatives (output 1.1.5). This will imply fostering political coherence among the various

strategies, institutional frameworks, and ecological restoration standards of the national, provincial, and municipal authorities with environmental competencies. Two specific purposes aimed to be achieved:

- To strengthen the necessary link between the policies and the set of interventions in the field, especially in those spaces where the APN does not have administrative power (i.e., spaces under the jurisdiction and competence of provincial or local governments).
- To create practical experience and knowledge that can be shared and applied in other protected areas of the national system and in other countries with similar problems.

Component 2: Implement demonstration interventions of ecological restoration.

8. This component will focus on developing practical interventions in the prioritised protected areas (Table 1). These activities will allow the development of: (i) information and practical knowledge, and (ii) experience and lessons on collaborative interventions to restore degraded environments. The component comprises two expected outcomes designed to address barriers 2, 3 and 4. The first aims to a gradual recovery of conservation values degraded by the presence of invasive alien species in the prioritised protected areas (outcome 2.1), and the second will focus on fire management (outcome 2.2).

Outcome 2.1: Gradual recovery of conservation values that have been degraded by the presence of invasive alien species in six protected areas and their buffer zones.

9. The outcome 2.1 will be built on the basis on five outputs. The experience and lessons of the demonstration interventions will be transferred and shared through training events, exchange of experiences (learning schools), and dissemination of good practices to be developed in the Component 3 of this project.
10. Restoration processes require a comprehensive understanding of the landscape and the scenario. That is, (i) managing the factors that produce disturbances, (ii) knowing the natural regeneration capacities, (iii) managing abiotic and biotic processes, and (iv) engaging key stakeholders (e.g., indigenous communities, inhabitants, and local governments) in decision-making, restoration actions and monitoring the recovery of the ecosystems. In protected areas, this also implies (i) the protection and regeneration of conservation values, (ii) the rehabilitation of degraded areas, and (iii) the sound management of productive areas in the buffer zones to ensure the functioning of ecological processes, the provision of ecosystem services and social interactions with the landscape.
11. In this context, the project will prepare a scientific baseline of the affected ecosystems and the factors that trigger degradation in each area (output 2.1.1). This analysis must provide sufficient information and knowledge (technical-scientific) about the magnitude of the damage to adjust the pertinent strategies and action plans. In addition, it will allow to precise the necessary investments in infrastructure and equipment to prevent damage, recover biodiversity and restore degraded ecosystems.

12. With an adequate baseline it will be possible to develop and implement collaborative plans for early warning detection, prevention, control, and monitoring of invasive alien species focused on the particularities of Los Glaciares and Campos del Tuyú National Parks (in their implementation phase) and Iberá (development and implementation), where there is a greater incidence of these threats on their ecosystems and biodiversity (output 2.1.2). The focus will be the problems with feral livestock (cattle, horses, and sheep), wild boar, axis deer and feral dogs. To support these processes the active involvement of key stakeholders will be promoted through information and awareness campaigns (i) about IAS and their impact, and (ii) how they can contribute to reduce the damage that IAS cause in nature (output 2.1.3). These campaigns will focus on the participation and involvement of neighbours, local and indigenous communities, producers and owners of agricultural fields, local and provincial governments, government entities - e.g., the National Agri-Food Health and Quality Service (SENASA), the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA), the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET) -, universities, non-governmental organizations and other restoration initiatives underway. All these activities will be carried out integrating affirmative actions for the equal participation of women, as well as young people.
13. Another relevant element to achieve this outcome is the implementation of a system to monitor and assess the recovery of the degraded areas and the populations of native flora and fauna (output 2.1.4). This will allow that the action plans are adapted in a timely manner to the regeneration responses. Especially, the reintroduction / population reinforcements and/or communities of native species that are key to restoring ecosystem functions of degraded spaces. For example:
- Recover the population density of the pampas deer (*Ozotoceros bezoarticus*) and the area of talar forests (*Celtis tala*) in Campos del Tuyú National Park.
 - The meadows and natural grazing areas of Pozuelos Natural Monument and the restoration of the high Andean meadows of Los Cardones National Park.
 - The huemul (*Hippocamelus bisulcus*), the Austral rail (*Rallus antarcticus*) and the guaitecas cypress (*Pilgerodendron uviferum*) in Los Glaciares National Park.
 - The Patagonian Andean Nothofagus Forest, the peat bogs, and valleys of the Tierra del Fuego National Park.
 - The native hygrophilous and xeric forests of the Iberá National Park.
 - The Caldén islets and vulnerable fauna, threatened or at risk of extinction such as the Chaco tortoise (*Chelonoidis chilensis*), yellow cardinal (*Gubernatrix cristata*), crowned solitary eagle (*Buteogallus coronatus*), among other species, from the Lihué Calel National Park.

It is foreseen that this monitoring and assessment system will be scaled up to the entire SNAP.

14. One of the IAS that causes the greatest damage to protected areas is uncontrolled feral and private livestock. Therefore, the project will develop and test methods and tools for the management and control of these animals in all the target protected areas but the Lihué Calel National Park. This will be done in collaboration with landowners, peasant communities and local governments, among other key stakeholders (output 2.1.5).

Outcome 2.2: Strengthened capacities for ecological fire management and wildfire prevention in the Campos del Tuyú, Iberá and Lihué Calel National Parks.

15. The second outcome of this component aims to strengthen the capacities for ecological fire management and prevention of high recurrent and intense wildfires in Campos del Tuyú, Iberá and Lihué Calel National Parks (outcome 2.2). The project proposes to start with the development and implementation of collaborative plans for the prevention and control of wildfires and for fire ecology and management. These plans will be based on a monitoring system (early warning) and the evaluation of impact and performance of actions in the field. To support these processes the active involvement of key stakeholders will be promoted through the ample involvement and participation of women and young community members (Output 2.2.1). In addition, these instruments will facilitate the APN and the municipalities have the capacity to react and respond to attempts or scourges in their territories, by determining the feasibility of establishing firebreaks, roadblocks, roads, prescribed burns, water reserves and/or elimination of sources of fuel plant material.
16. The application of these instruments will be viable to the extent that the project manages to establish collaborative work networks with local stakeholders. Therefore, a key building block will be to implement information and awareness raising campaigns on ecological fire management and fire prevention (output 2.2.2). These campaigns will promote the integration of women and young people in the fire prevention and management processes in Campos del Tuyú, Iberá and Lihué Calel National Parks, and particularly, early warning detection of wildfire and prescribed burns in Iberá National Park.
17. All these interventions will be complemented with the development of:
- A computer system for fire prevention and early warning, which will consider the experience of the Iberá National Park (output 2.2.3).
 - Collaborative plans for monitoring and post-fire recovery of degraded areas and affected fauna and flora populations (output 2.2.4), to recurrently measure the impact of the interventions and take appropriate corrective measures.
- The involvement of young people as collaborators will be promoted due to their technological skills.

Component 3: Generate, communicate, and disseminate knowledge on sustainable ecological restoration.

18. This component will document and disseminate lessons among key stakeholders and the public. The expected outcome is strengthened knowledge management, awareness, and communication on ecological restoration in protected areas and their buffer zones (Outcome 3.1).

Outcome 3.1: Strengthened knowledge management, awareness, and communication on ecological restoration in protected areas and their buffer zones in Argentina.

19. To achieve this outcome, the project proposes to develop an inclusive communication and awareness strategy for specific groups and sites, with the involvement of key stakeholders providing attention to diversity, gender equality and intergenerational equity in the seven selected protected areas (Output 3.1.1).

20. This strategy will establish a roadmap for the transfer of knowledge and will consider the lessons and good practices of ecological restoration that will be systematised and disseminated among the protected areas involved, and between these and other protected spaces at the national and international level (Output 3.1.2). Attention will be given to pedagogical facilitation processes to bring information to the diversity of actors linked to ecological restoration.
21. In this sense, the project plans to organise knowledge exchange events through learning schools, where key stakeholders from the seven protected areas and the project team will share and analyse the outcomes achieved, the innovative solutions applied, the best practices identified, and the lessons learned from the different processes, and between restoration initiatives and programmes at the national and international levels. Affirmative action's facilitating women participation and their specific lessons learned will be identified and highlighted. Youth leadership will be encouraged (output 3.1.3). Knowledge exchange will be enhanced by an electronic knowledge management platform on ecological restoration (official portal of the Argentine State: argentina.gob.ar), connected to the APN Biodiversity Information System (sib.gob.ar) (output 3.1.4). The aim is to facilitate communication and access to information by key stakeholders and to disseminate lessons learned and best practices.
22. Finally, the project will develop capacity-building processes through training events, research and scientific technical publications, among others (output 3.1.5). It is foreseen that these activities will strengthen institutional and community capacities, giving attention to the involvement of women and youth from local communities.
23. It is important to highlight that knowledge sharing includes the institutional and community levels, in particular among the demonstration interventions (outcome 3.1) to share best practices and to encourage the replication of successful approaches. The strategy for communicating lessons and best practices will ensure that there is specific and committed communication and, in turn, that it guarantees that the target audience is well defined. This component will identify the measures that must be considered to ensure that there is strategic communication, awareness, and dissemination of the project outcomes.

Component 4: Monitor and evaluate project execution.

24. This component seeks to ensure that the project's monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are successfully implemented and serve as a basis for adaptive management (outcome 4.1).

Outcome 4.1: Effective project-level monitoring and evaluation in accordance with GEF requirements.

25. To achieve this outcome, the project will develop four outputs aimed at achieving effective monitoring and evaluation of the set of interventions, in accordance with the GEF requirements:

- Implement an inception workshop to ensure a common understanding of the project among project partners and key stakeholders (e.g., project delivery structure, roles and responsibilities, reporting) and to finalise the workplan and budget for the first year (output 4.1.1).
 - Carry out reporting and monitoring actions to track progress and support decision making (output 4.1.2). This includes:
 - i. Preparing annual implementation reports (project implementation review, PIR).
 - ii. Monitoring the project indicators including the GEF core indicators, the Gender Action Plan, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and the Environmental and Social management Framework.
 - iii. Meetings of the project Board of Directors^[19] to review progress and to provide strategic guidance.
- The Board of Directors will be made up of at least the GEF implementing agency (CAF), the entity that will execute the initiative (APN) and representatives of the project beneficiaries.
- Execute a external independent a mid-term review (output 4.1.3) and a terminal evaluation (output 4.1.4).

26. It is important to highlight that the monitoring and evaluation system will include gender-sensitive indicators to measure towards the gender targets.

[19] The Board of Directors is a mandatory governance mechanism that supervises the Project Execution Unit (PEU), carries out strategic direction of the project, reviews and approves reports, budgets and operational plans presented by the PEU. The PEU acts as secretary of the Board.

Global environmental benefits to which the project contributes.

1. The proposed project has the purpose of laying the foundations for the progressive recovery of the ecological resilience of degraded ecosystems in the selected protected areas to achieve [Global Environmental Benefits](#) (GEB) in terms of biodiversity and sustainable forest management, two of the dimensions of work that they are part of the GEF's priority investments. The project will contribute to: (a) conservation of biological diversity of global importance (e.g., the Patagonian haemul, the caldenal forests, and the cardonales) , (b) reduction of forest loss and degradation, (c) maintenance of the range of environmental services and products derived from forests, and (d) improved sustainable livelihoods for local communities and forest-dependent people.
2. In this context, the global environmental benefits of this project aim to improve the management effectiveness of 1,106,601 hectares corresponding to the surface of the seven prioritised protected areas (Table 1). This will be done by creating and strengthening enabling conditions to promote successful ecological restoration, together with practical interventions for the recovery of degraded ecosystems, ecological fire management and wildfire prevention, as well as strengthening knowledge management.

3. Through demonstration interventions in the field, the project will intervene in the restoration of 74,878 hectares located within and in the buffer zone of the prioritised protected areas. These actions range from the collection of baseline information on the damage and the factors that drive degradation, the management and control of IAS and feral livestock, to the monitoring of the recovery of the intervened native spaces and populations, and the execution of awareness raising campaigns for stakeholders. These actions will be strengthened by reinforcing (i) governance processes and (ii) knowledge management about ecological restoration in protected areas.

Elements of transformation and innovation of the project.

4. The innovation of the project focuses on exploring new approaches to build collaborative management models for the implementation of ecological restoration processes in protected areas and their buffer zones, which could be replicated within Argentina and internationally. Moving toward ecological restoration of selected protected areas requires dialogue, information and knowledge exchange, standardised monitoring protocols, impact assessment, and programmatic reporting. To this end, the project lays the foundations to form and, where appropriate, consolidate and strengthen inclusive governance mechanisms in each selected protected area to generate policies, address common problems and threats such as, for example, the loss of biodiversity, degradation of ecosystems and the impact on the provision of ecosystem services produced by the presence of IAS, feral cattle, and recurrent wildfires in their territories. In these circumstances, the spaces for dialogue and conflict resolution will provide confidence, credibility, and capacity in the APN to attract and manage new investments in the sustainability of protected areas, through a solid and concerted long-term collaboration with the key stakeholders.
5. The project experience will be useful for other regions interested in improving their ecological restoration processes and in the recovery of degraded conservation objects. The demonstration interventions focused on protected areas and their buffer zones will allow to face common problems and threats, generate practical experience and lessons in active restoration that will be useful both for Argentina and for the entire region, as they are configured as actions that are replicable and scalable to other regions of the world that face similar challenges.
 6. A central element of change will be to explore the development of financial sustainability mechanisms for the six National Parks and the Natural Monument (Table 1). The aim will be that the restoration processes have a secure long-term flow of resources to achieve their goals. It is foreseen that these mechanisms could be replicated or scaled-up in other protected areas of the SNAP.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Argentina has international commitments such as the “Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” (CEDAW) and the “Inter-American Convention of Belem Do Pará”, internationally accepted instruments on women's rights. In addition, Argentina is a party of various international environmental agreements on biodiversity and climate change (CBD, UNFCCC, CITES) which have mandates for the integration of gender equality. In the same way, the Constitution of the Argentine Nation (1994 reform) establishes real equality of opportunities between men and women for access to elective and party positions and guarantees through positive actions equality in the regulation of political parties and in the electoral regime (Art. 37).

The country has a series of regulatory instruments that promote gender equality and protect the fundamental right to equal treatment and the right not to be discriminated against ^[1]. At the institutional level, the APN

and the “General Collective Labour Agreement for the National Public Administration” ([Decree 214/2006](#)) establish the procedure for applying the Framework Protocol for addressing gender-based violence in the institution. This regulation establishes two support bodies for the application of the protocol within the APN: (i) an advisory committee on gender, equality, and diversity policies, and (ii) a guidance and support team.

In terms of figures on gender equality issues, Argentina has made several advances in relation to countries in the region. For example, 100% of the legal frameworks that promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality are in force under SDG Indicator 5. Furthermore, in February 2021, 42.4% of parliamentary seats were held by women (UN Women, 2023).

However, social indicators from 2018 show that unfavourable conditions for women remain. For example, 49.9 teenage pregnancies (between 15 and 18 years old) per 1,000 women. Like most Latin American countries, women over 15 years of age dedicate 23.4% of their time to unpaid domestic and care work, compared to 9.2% of men (UN Women; Women Count, Argentina Profile). The Gender Inequality Index (GII) places Argentina in the 69th place and has a gap in the workforce of 29.3% between both sexes (women 45% and men 74.4%) (UNDP, 2021).

In this context, considering the social factors of women's lives and the barriers to their adequate involvement, full participation, and subsequent decision-making in governance within protected areas, during the PPG stage a specific gender analysis will be prepared to understand the precise conditions in the context of each protected area participating in the project. Additionally, a gender action plan will be developed to integrate affirmative actions to balance women's participation and access to decision-making, as well as improve equal access to project benefits. For this purpose, the gender action plan will include gender-sensitive indicators and the pertinent budget for its application.

It is relevant to mention that in the context of the gender analysis, the integration of specific actions that allow greater involvement and better participation of youth from protected areas and their buffer zones will be considered. Actions will be recommended to identify and strengthen leadership of various genders to advance towards generational replacement processes, as well as to promote the development of sustainable activities in the hands of new generations.

As part of the gender action plan, the project will actively promote through affirmative actions the participation of women and youth throughout the intervention, such as:

- The participation of women and youth in restoration governance platforms in participating protected areas.
- Identify and strengthen women and youth organisations to work on leadership and empowerment for long-term decision making.
- Ensure the participation of women and young people in training and awareness processes.

- Involve young people in early warning processes and provide them with a potential role as risk communicators and response collaborators.
- Capture and share lessons learned about the integration of the gender approach in restoration processes in protected areas.
- Generate spaces for reflection and awareness on aspects of gender equality and eradicate violence and discrimination based on gender.

^[1] The following instruments of relevance to this project are mentioned: Regulatory framework of the protocol approved by DA No 1012/2021: Law 26, 485 on comprehensive protection of women, regulated by Decree 1,011/2010; Law 26,743 on gender identity; Law 23,592 on discriminatory acts; and Law 27, 499 on mandatory gender training for all people who make up the three powers of the state, Decree 721/2020 on job quotas in the national public sector for transvestite, trans and transgender people.

^[1] The following instruments of relevance to this project are mentioned: Regulatory framework of the protocol approved by DA No 1012/2021: Law 26, 485 on comprehensive protection of women, regulated by Decree 1,011/2010; Law 26,743 on gender identity; Law 23,592 on discriminatory acts; and Law 27, 499 on mandatory gender training for all people who make up the three powers of the state, Decree 721/2020 on job quotas in the national public sector for transvestite, trans and transgender people.

Coordination and Cooperation with Ongoing Initiatives and Project.

Does the GEF Agency expect to play an execution role on this project?

If so, please describe that role here. Also, please add a short explanation to describe cooperation with ongoing initiatives and projects, including potential for co-location and/or sharing of expertise/staffing

This project will have synergies with other ongoing investments implemented by the APN, in strategic alliance with other initiatives and projects of other public and private entities. One of them is the project "[Sustainable Recovery of Landscapes and Livelihoods in Argentina](#)" (Loan Agreement 9335-AR, PROGREEN Donation Agreement B7681-AR). This project began in February 2022 and has a duration of five years. It includes investments in three of the seven protected areas of this project (i.e., Los Glaciares, Tierra del Fuego, and Los Cardones National Parks). Depending on convergent expected results, investments may be articulated in analytical and knowledge products, biodiversity baselines, management plans for invasive alien species, ecological restoration and fire control, actions to strengthen capacities and technical knowledge.

Another complementary and synergistic initiative is the project "Strengthening the capacities of the National Parks Administration" (ARG/23/004), approved by the APN Board of Directors in [August 2023](#), whose actions related to strengthening capacities for fire management and management of buffer zones will be coherent and incremental to this project. This initiative is financed by public funds from its own resources and from the General National Treasury, with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

In addition, the project will collaborate with various initiatives of civil society organizations. One of them is the initiative “Conservation of small cats in Argentina (Panthera)”. APN signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the international organization “Panthera Corporation” with the objective of working together for the conservation of the jaguar and other wild cats^[2]¹⁰. Under this framework, letters of intentions for projects and joint fundraising have been signed. The project will also establish synergies with the “[Iberá Project](#)” that carries out actions to restore species and ecosystems in the Iberá National Park. This project is executed by the Rewilding Argentina Foundation, which carries out international philanthropy efforts to raise funds.

This project will be based on the knowledge and learning generated in previous projects executed by the APN and by other public and private entities, such as “Rural Corridors and Biodiversity” ([GEF ID 3830](#)) (GEF Grant TF OA0233-AR). Since its inception in 2017, this project produced relevant analytical instruments, such as the “Study of financing sources and mechanisms for protected areas and corridors and development of application instruments”, which provides information and recommendations for the financial sustainability of the projects and activities of the National System of Protected Areas^[3]¹¹. In addition, numerous management plans for protected areas and corridors were developed in a participatory manner, capacity-building activities were carried out, public policy instruments for the corridors were discussed, and sustainable development subprojects were developed. The processes, products, and outcomes provide useful background and rationale to support the development of enabling conditions for the current ecological restoration initiative.

Annex 1 compiles other international cooperation projects with which coordination and collaboration processes will be established to increase the impact of interventions and optimize the use of resources.

[2] Source: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/noticias/la-administracion-de-parques-nacionales-firmo-un-memorandum-para-la-proteccion-de-felinos>

[3] Source: Study of financing sources and mechanisms for protected areas and corridors and development of application instruments ([2021](#)).

Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
1106601	0	0	0

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

0	0	0	0
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Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
1106601	0	0	0

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Campo del Tuyú	555577543	National Park	3,040.00						
Iberá	16890	National Park	195,094.00						
Laguna de los Pozuelos	3	Natural Monument or Feature	16,000.00						
Lihué Calel	20	National Park	32,514.00						
Los Cardones	166722	National Park	64,117.00						
Los Glaciares	6	National Park	726,927.00						
Tierra del Fuego	14	National Park	68,909.00						

Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
74877.6	0	0	0

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
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25,286.60

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
Woodlands	9,050.00			
Natural grass	32,737.00			

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
7,804.00			

Indicator 6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (direct)	2010943	0	0	0
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (indirect)	0	0	0	0

Indicator 6.1 Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided in the AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (direct)	2,010,943			
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting	2030			
Duration of accounting	20			

Indicator 6.2 Emissions Avoided Outside AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) Sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (direct)				
Expected metric tons of CO₂e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

Indicator 6.3 Energy Saved (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Total Target Benefit	Energy (MJ) (At PIF)	Energy (MJ) (At CEO Endorsement)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at MTR)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at TE)
Target Energy Saved (MJ)				

Indicator 6.4 Increase in Installed Renewable Energy Capacity per Technology (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Technology	Capacity (MW) (Expected at PIF)	Capacity (MW) (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at MTR)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female	308,102			
Male	286,919			
Total	595,021	0	0	0

Explain the methodological approach and underlying logic to justify target levels for Core and Sub-Indicators (max. 250 words, approximately 1/2 page)

Core indicator 1: Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management:

80. This indicator refers to the number of hectares of terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness (Sub-indicator 1.2). In this regard, the project estimates a goal of 1,106,601 ha, which corresponds to the total surface area of the selected protected areas, distributed as follows: Los Glaciares (726,927 ha, covers 66% of the goal), Campos del Tuyú (3,040 ha, 0.27%), Los Cardones (64,117 ha, 6%), Tierra del Fuego (68,909 ha, 6%), Iberá (195,094 ha, 18%), Lihué Calel (32,514 ha, 3%), and Laguna de los Pozuelos (16,000, 1%). In terms of management effectiveness, this indicator uses as a baseline the results of the application of the monitoring tool for protected area projects of the GEF-7 of the biodiversity focal area (METT). The selected protected areas reported the following results: Los Glaciares (64 points), Campos del Tuyú (61), Los Cardones (55), Tierra del Fuego (54), Iberá (59), Lihué Calel (51), and Laguna de los Pozuelos (54 points). Through strengthening the capacities of key stakeholders for better governance and sustainability of ecological restoration in protected areas and their buffer zones (Component 1), the execution of demonstration interventions to address critical restoration issues ecological, generate practical experience, collaborative work and replication (Component 2) and the generation of communication inputs and dissemination of knowledge on the subject (Component 3), the project will achieve substantial improvements in management effectiveness in the selected protected areas, reflected in better scores on the METT at mid-term and at the end of the project.

Core indicator 3: Area of land and ecosystems under restoration:

81. It is estimated that the project will intervene with restoration actions in around 74,878 hectares in total, distributed in: 25,287 hectares of forest surface and forest lands under restoration (Subindicator 3.2), 41,787 ha of natural grasslands (32,737 ha) and forests (9,050 ha) under restoration (Sub-indicator 3.3), and 7,804 ha of wetlands under restoration processes (Sub-indicator 3.4). The goal of this indicator is distributed along the seven selected protected areas and their buffer zones, according to the following detail:

- a. Los Glaciares National Park: There are around 21,300 hectares prioritised for restoration due to the degradation caused by the presence of feral livestock (cattle and horses) . The environmental problem caused by these practically feral animals, unmanaged for many years, is concentrated in this area. In addition, there is concern for the safety of visitors who make the Vuelta al Huemul journey, from being attacked by these species.
- b. Campos del Tuyú National Park: Priority has been given to intervene an estimated area of 3,150 hectares where damage is evident due to the presence of IAS, feral livestock, wildfires, and landscape fragmentation, within the protected area and specially in the buffer zone . Within the National Park, 400 hectares will be intervened (300 hectares of grassland and 100 hectares located in the Marismas del Tuyú natural reserve) and in the buffer zone it is planned to restore 2,750 hectares (2,650 hectares of grassland and 100 hectares of forest) in collaboration with the key stakeholders from the area.
- c. Los Cardones National Park: The restoration goal is estimated at 2,064 hectares . The interventions aims at the recovery of the high Andean vegas, plains and other spaces degraded by the massive presence of large and small livestock. In these spaces, the aim is to recover, under a collaborative work scheme with the stakeholders from the territory, the water retention and storage capacity, the vegetation coverage that promotes habitat conditions for the native fauna, particularly those rare species or those that explicitly depend on the National Park's high-altitude wetlands.

- d. **Tierra del Fuego National Park:** The estimated area to intervene is around 3,500 hectares of forest (Subindicator 3.3) that are concentrated in the public use area located in the southern sector of the protected area, which borders Ushuaia, affected by the presence of feral livestock, mainly horses. In this area, interventions will be carried out to recover the forest surface of the Nothofagus forest, with actions to remove horses, information, and awareness campaigns for stakeholders, and monitoring the impact of the interventions and the performance of the activities in the territory.
- e. **Iberá National Park:** The area to be restored is estimated at 38,000 hectares, a surface in which the damage caused by the presence of IAS, feral livestock, wildfires, and fragmentation of the protected landscape is concentrated. The interventions aim to control the population density of IAS of fauna, wild boar, and axis deer, mainly through hunting campaigns, cage traps, with the support of key stakeholders (universities, NGOs, hunters' associations, and brigade members, among others).
- f. **Lihué Calel National Park:** The project intervention will have an impact on an estimated area of 5,538 hectares of forests and forest lands (Subindicator 3.2), affected by large fires. The predominant landscape is shrublands with islands of caldenes / algarrobos (trees) and/or scattered caldenes. The selected area includes the two strict nature reserves (RNE) and most of the Caldén / algarrobo population centres of the park affected by fires. The interventions will be aimed at the recovery of degraded areas through actions aimed at preventing and reducing the occurrence of high intensity wildfires, focused on improving / make more effective the primary attention system for forest wildfires and the provision of equipment and instruments for fuel reduction in key areas (maintenance of trails, roads, and firebreaks).
- g. **Laguna de los Pozuelos Natural Monument:** Interventions will be carried out in the intensive public use sector of the protected area and in neighbouring fields within its buffer zone, working on an estimated surface of 1,326 hectares. Interventions include grassland management and livestock management activities (camelids and sheep), closure of "aguadas" (water sources), construction works to adapt the protected area's access path to the presence of the wetlands, other complementary infrastructure works and acquisition of equipment. Additionally, surveys and interventions are included to improve knowledge and conservation status of the western queñoa forests present in the buffer zone.

Core indicator 11: People benefiting from GEF-financed investments disaggregated by sex:

82. The total number of beneficiaries will be about 595,021 people (286,919 men and 308,102 women). This indicator reflects the total number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by sex according to the percentages from the National Census of Population, Households and Housing (2022). The number of direct beneficiaries for each protected area has been determined through the analysis of each activity and they have been defined as direct recipients from the activities, goods and/or services generated by the project.

Core indicator 6: Greenhouse gas emission mitigated: The estimated total green house emissions mitigated will be 2.010.943 metric tons of CO₂e of carbon sequestration and avoided emissions over 20 years (accounting period), starting in 20230 (start year of accounting), after project completion. This value was estimated using the Ex-Ante Carbon-balance Tool.

Key Risks

	Rating	Explanation of risk and mitigation measures
CONTEXT		
Climate	High	Climate variability and change strongly affect the entire country. The variability is affected by the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO)

		<p>and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD). During El Niño conditions, precipitation increases during spring and summer in the north and centre of the country. Temperatures have increased since the 1960s and are projected to continue to rise globally by +1.6°C by 2050 (RCP 8.5 scenario). Precipitation trends are highly variable, but overall annual precipitation is projected to decrease (RCP scenario 8.5). However, extreme precipitation events are expected to increase in frequency and intensity. Overall, the forecast is that prolonged droughts, rising sea levels and more extreme weather will increase in the coming decades. Climate change is expected to make ENSO events stronger and more frequent. Until 12 October 2023, El Niño was developing. It is anticipated that its conditions will continue until March – May 2024. During the PPG and project implementation, climate conditions will be monitored through the Climate Prediction Centre of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).</p>
Environmental and Social	Moderate	<p>Limitations for equal participation of women as project beneficiaries. The social and cultural conditions of the intervention areas face various forms of gender inequality, so the project can generate, if these situations are not faced, greater inequalities and strengthen the gender gaps. During the PPG, a gender analysis and action plan will be prepared to address the existing barriers. Conflicts due to lack of consultation with indigenous communities. During the PIF, it was verified if there were indigenous peoples linked to the proposed project activities in the participating</p>

		<p>protected areas. There is a community in Laguna de los Pozuelos Natural Monument with which a first approach has been established to inform the community about the project proposal. During the PPG, a full consultation process will be implemented. Conflicts with communities and neighbours of the protected areas due to restrictions derived from project activities (e.g., restriction of access to grazing resources). During the PPG, the potential or real impact will be verified together with the interested parties and the necessary course of action will be established to reach agreements and/or action plans that integrate management measures to prevent or compensate the project-derived impacts.</p>
Political and Governance	High	<p>Changes in the political priorities of new government authorities which may result in a lack of support for the execution of the project. During project preparation and project implementation there will be changes in the federal, provincial, and municipal governments. The most recent changes were in the federal and provincial governments on 10 December 2023. It is common that after elections the new government implements changes in different areas (e.g, financial management, environmental priorities). When governments changes occur the project will be presented to the new authorities.</p>
INNOVATION		
Institutional and Policy		Not Applicable
Technological		Not Applicable
Financial and Business Model		Not Applicable

EXECUTION

Capacity for Implementation		Not Applicable
Fiduciary	Moderate	Difficulty in materializing co-financing due to the change in priorities of the new government. During the PPG, clear communication channels will be maintained with the relevant authorities to secure their interest and support.
Stakeholder	Low	Disinterest of key stakeholders in participating in the governance platforms or collaborative activities related to the project. During the PPG, there will be a stakeholder analysis that will identify interests, concerns, and limitations. Consequently, a stakeholder involvement plan will be made for the execution of the project.
Other		Not Applicable
Overall Risk Rating	Moderate	The project categorization is 'moderate risk'.

C. ALIGNMENT WITH GEF-8 PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES AND COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Describe how the proposed interventions are aligned with GEF- 8 programming strategies and country and regional priorities, including how these country strategies and plans relate to the multilateral environmental agreements.

Confirm if any country policies that might contradict with intended outcomes of the project have been identified, and how the project will address this.

For projects aiming to generate biodiversity benefits (regardless of what the source of the resources is - i.e., BD, CC or LD), please identify which of the 23 targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework the project contributes to and explain how. (max. 500 words, approximately 1 page)

1. This project contributes to Objective 1 of the GEF-8 Biodiversity focal area, which is to improve the conservation, sustainable use, and restoration of natural ecosystems. In addition, through Output 1.1.3, the project contributes to Objective 3 which is to increase the mobilisation of internal resources for biodiversity.
2. The project contributes to advancing the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biological Diversity Framework \(GBF\)](#), by:

- Contributing to the restoration of the integrity, connectivity and resilience of the degraded and prioritised ecosystems of protected areas and their buffer zones (Goal A),
 - Improving the flow of goods and services that protected areas provide for people who depend on the health of these ecosystems to sustain their livelihoods (Goal B), and
 - Developing the means, including financial, to strengthen institutional, operational and community capacities with the participation and involvement of stakeholders in ecological restoration processes (Goal D).
3. The project will contribute to advance towards the following 2030 global targets of the GBF: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23.
 4. GEF resources will support Argentina's efforts to achieve the Goal 15 of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#): to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. The project will specifically contribute to achieving targets 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 15.4, 15.5, 15.8, 15.9, and 15a.
 5. The project will contribute to achieving the global goals of the [Decade on Ecosystem Restoration \(2021-2030\)](#). The 74,878 hectares that will be restored with the present project are part of Argentina's commitment to restore 2,140,000 hectares until 2030 under the three Rio conventions (i.e., Climate Change, Biological Diversity, and the Fight against Desertification). Likewise, the area to be restored is in line with Argentina's commitments within the framework of the [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#) regarding the component of [Neutrality of Land Degradation](#). Argentina has established a commitment (linked to target 15.3¹¹¹² of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development) to restore 1,340,000 hectares, which includes (a) 1,000,000 hectares of degraded croplands, (b) 200,000 ha of forest land, and (c) 140,000 ha of grasslands and savannahs. Regarding the commitments within the framework of the [Bonn Challenge, Argentina](#) defined the goal of restoring 1,000,000 hectares of degraded forest lands. The Argentine commitments total 2,340,000 hectares under restoration and are part of the [2020 Database of Commitments of the Decade for Global Restoration](#) signed under the three Rio conventions.
 6. The project will contribute to the objectives of the [National Plan for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change](#) (strategic line conservation of biodiversity and common goods, line of action 6: restoration and conservation of ecosystems), and the [National Action Plan for Native Forest and Change Climate](#) (EEO 9. Restoration and recovery). Also, the project will provide continuity to the National Strategy on Invasive Alien Species ([ENEEL](#)), developed within the framework of the National Strategy on Biological Diversity and the 2016–2020 Action Plan (ENBPA). The actions related to firefighting will be coordinated through the Federal Fire Management System which is coordinated by the [National Fire Management Service](#) dependent on the MAyDS ([Law 26, 815](#)). It will support the production of scientific knowledge on ecological restoration in the context of the integration of the APN into the Interinstitutional Council of Science and Technology ([Law 25, 467](#)).
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^[1] By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded lands and soils, including lands affected by desertification, drought, and floods, and strive to achieve a world without land degradation.

D. POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment:

We confirm that gender dimensions relevant to the project have been addressed as per GEF Policy and are clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

We confirm that key stakeholders were consulted during PIF development as required per GEF policy, their relevant roles to project outcomes and plan to develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan before CEO endorsement has been clearly articulated in the Project Description (Section B).

Yes

Were the following stakeholders consulted during project identification phase:

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities: Yes

Civil Society Organizations: Yes

Private Sector: Yes

Provide a brief summary and list of names and dates of consultations

1. During the preparation of the PIF, participatory work meetings have been held with stakeholders to design the project proposal. Due to time constraints, consultations in each protected area were carried out virtually between September and October 2023. After, an in-person workshop was held in Buenos Aires on 18 and 19 October 2023, where the key elements of the PIF were validated and held some individual meetings with APN authorities. On 27 November 2023, the final virtual PIF review meeting was held. On 28 November 2023, a meeting was held to present and inform about the project to the indigenous community identified in Laguna de los Pozuelos Natural Monument (Annex 2. Information on the consultation process for the construction of the PIF and means of verification). Table 3 details the number of participants and the dates of the PIF development process.

Table 3. Number of participants in the PIF development process.

Meeting	Number of participants	Date
Kick-off meeting.	10	26 July 2023.
Work meetings.	10	29 August – 13 September 2023.
Virtual meetings in the participating protected areas (seven meetings).	120	25 September to 3 October 2023.
In-person workshop in Buenos Aires.	42	18 and 19 October 2023.
Final virtual PIF review meeting.	14	27 November 2023.
Information meeting for the indigenous community of the Laguna de los Pozuelos Natural Monument.	1 ¹	28 November 2023
Total:	197	

In addition, a mapping of project key stakeholders was carried out. In the first instance, 80 stakeholders related to the project were identified. Table 4 summarizes the main stakeholders identified to be involved in project execution, their potential role, and the expected involvement during the PPG phase. The stakeholders who participated in the development of the PIF are highlighted in light blue. See Annex -Table 4 (in the roadmap section).

Stakeholders to be involved during the Project Preparation phase (PPG).

During the formulation of the PIF, it was identified that in Laguna de los Pozuelos Natural Monument there is a group of inhabitants of the original community of Ciénega Grande. In this context and in accordance with the legislation of the Argentine Republic ([Law 24, 071](#)) on the provisions of Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, which determines the obligation to guarantee the rights to consultation of indigenous communities, the Protocol of Prior, Free and Informed Consultation must be applied to indigenous communities in national protected areas participating in the project. In this sense and following what is stated in the protocol, during the PPG phase a plan will be designed to apply the protocol of free prior informed consultation in the areas of the Laguna de los Pozuelos Natural Monument. It is important to highlight, as aforementioned, there was a meeting on 28 November 2023, with the President of the Aboriginal Community of Ciénega Grande to inform about the project. Also, a member of this community participated community during the preparatory consultation workshop held in the Laguna de los Pozuelos National Monument on 27 September 2023.

During the PPG stage, a mapping and analysis of the key stakeholders linked to the project activities will be prepared, and will allow to classify them as collaborators, have a neutral or discrepant role. With this information, the appropriate mechanisms for their involvement and participation will be determined through a Stakeholder Engagement Plan. The plan will integrate specific actions to address limitations and barriers to the participation of the key stakeholders, mechanisms to address the barriers, and a budget for its implementation.

^[1] The following instruments of relevance to this project are mentioned: Regulatory framework of the protocol approved by DA No 1012/2021: Law 26, 485 on comprehensive protection of women, regulated by Decree 1,011/2010; Law 26,743 on gender identity; Law 23,592 on discriminatory acts; and Law 27, 499 on mandatory gender training for all people who make up the three powers of the state, Decree 721/2020 on job quotas in the national public sector for transvestite, trans and transgender people.

(Please upload to the portal documents tab any stakeholder engagement plan or assessments that have been done during the PIF development phase.)

Private Sector

Will there be private sector engagement in the project?

Yes

And if so, has its role been described and justified in the section B project description?

Yes

Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Risks

We confirm that we have provided indicative information regarding Environmental and Social risks associated with the proposed project or program and any measures to address such risks and impacts (this information should be presented in Annex D).

Yes

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
Low			

E. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

Knowledge management

We confirm that an approach to Knowledge Management and Learning has been clearly described in the Project Description (Section B)

Yes

ANNEX A: FINANCING TABLES

GEF Financing Table

Indicative Trust Fund Resources Requested by Agency(ies), Country(ies), Focal Area and the Programming of Funds

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non-Grant	GEF Project Grant(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total GEF Financing (\$)
CAF	GET	Argentina	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	Grant	6,268,011.00	564,121.00	6,832,132.00
Total GEF Resources (\$)						6,268,011.00	564,121.00	6,832,132.00

Project Preparation Grant (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested?

true

PPG Amount (\$)

150000

PPG Agency Fee (\$)

13500

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Programming of Funds	Grant / Non- Grant	PPG(\$)	Agency Fee(\$)	Total PPG Funding(\$)
CAF	GET	Argentina	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation: BD-1	Grant	150,000.00	13,500.00	163,500.00
Total PPG Amount (\$)						150,000.00	13,500.00	163,500.00

Please provide justification

Sources of Funds for Country Star Allocation

GEF Agency	Trust Fund	Country/ Regional/ Global	Focal Area	Sources of Funds	Total(\$)
CAF	GET	Argentina	Biodiversity	BD STAR Allocation	6,995,632.00
Total GEF Resources					6,995,632.00

Indicative Focal Area Elements

Programming Directions	Trust Fund	GEF Project Financing(\$)	Co-financing(\$)
BD-1-2	GET	6,268,011.00	43876075
Total Project Cost		6,268,011.00	43,876,075.00

Indicative Co-financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Amount(\$)
Recipient Country Government	Argentina	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	35599208
Others	IBRD - PROGREEN	Public Investment	Investment mobilized	7071888
Donor Agency	UNDP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	300000
GEF Agency	CAF	Grant	Investment mobilized	300000

Others	TBD	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	604979
Total Co-financing				43,876,075.00

Describe how any "Investment Mobilized" was identified

Co-financing from own source: The amount in kind is made up of current 2023 credit and 2024 budget project and 2025 and 2026 projection of the Fire Management Program, infrastructure works, operating budget of the seven protected areas of the project and expenses of personnel (salaries), consumer goods, rents, fuel, machinery, and equipment, PROFOCIS -PADAS of the national conservation directorate, general directorate of administration and regional directorates. Adopted exchange rate 2023/24 = USD 920.35.

Co-financing from the Landscapes Project: The amount in kind is made up of infrastructure works, analytical products, hiring of human resources and community development subprojects in Los Cardones National Park, Los Glaciares National Park, and Tierra del Fuego National Park.

UNDP Project Co-financing: The amount in kind is made up of equipment for fire management, analytical products, equipment for accidents and emergencies for the seven protected areas of the project. These resources are part of project "Strengthening the capacities of the National Parks Administration" (PNUD ARG/23/004) which is funded by the Argentinian National Treasure.

CAF co-financing: The amount in kind is made up of support for the execution of the project by the CAF.

ANNEX B: ENDORSEMENTS

GEF Agency(ies) Certification

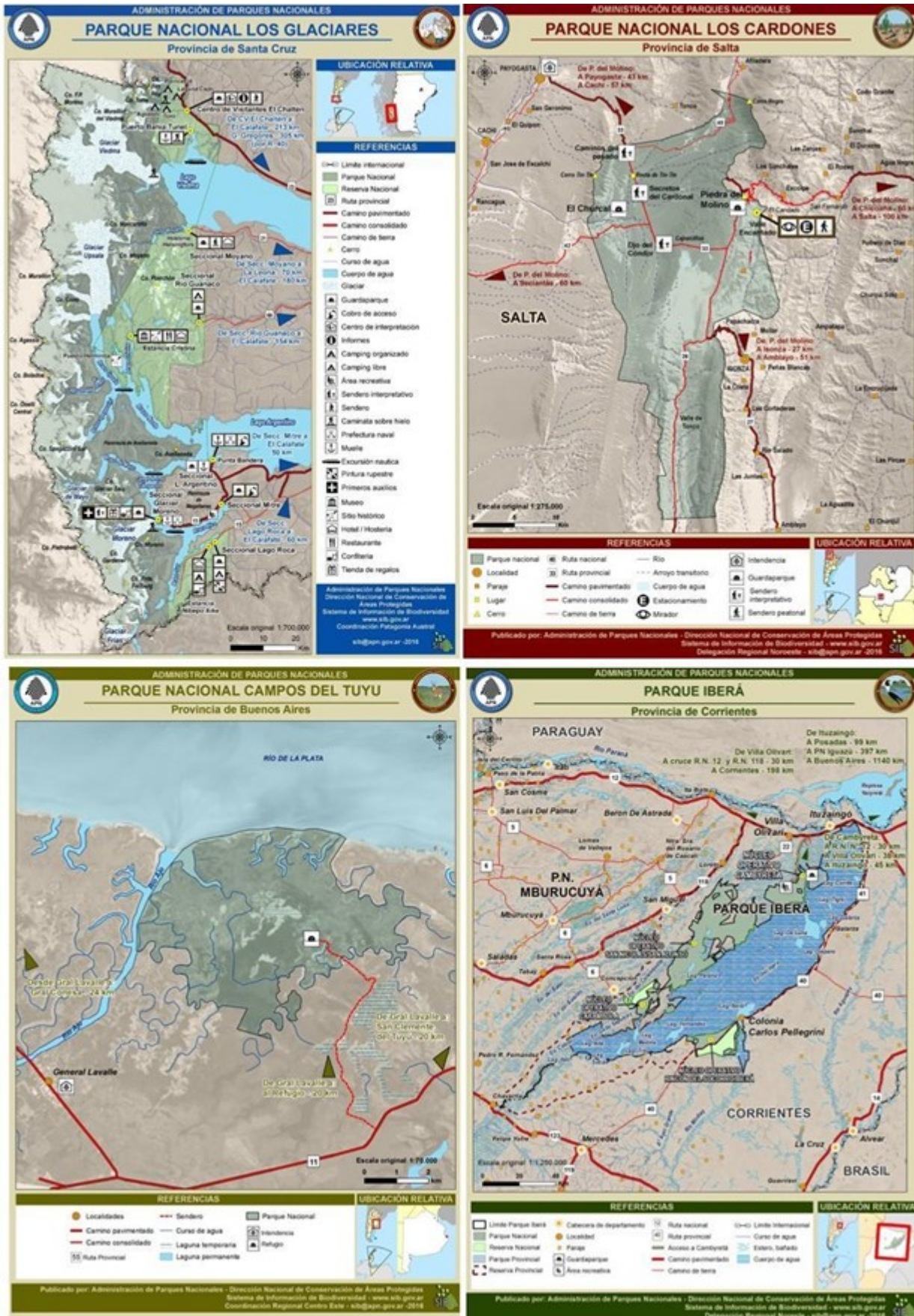
GEF Agency Type	Name	Date	Project Contact Person	Phone	Email
Project Coordinator	Mauricio Velásquez	12/19/2023	Mauricio Velasquez Romo	+593994804007	mvelasquez@caf.com
GEF Agency Coordinator	René Gómez-García	12/19/2023	René Gómez-García	+59896181288	rgomezgarcia@caf.com

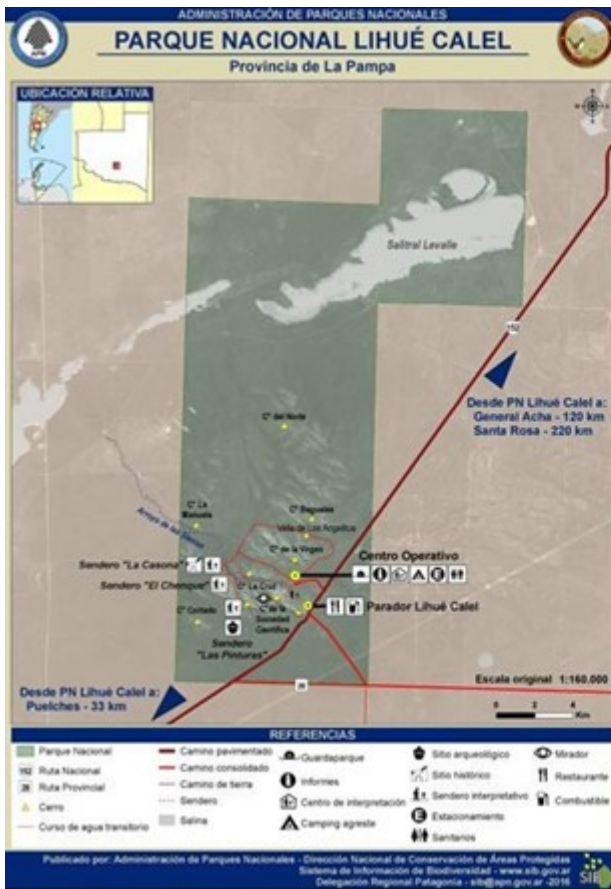
Record of Endorsement of GEF Operational Focal Point (s) on Behalf of the Government(s):

Name	Position	Ministry	Date (MM/DD/YYYY)
Martin Illescas	International Cooperation Director- GEF Operational Focal Point	Ministry of Environment Water and Sustainable Development	11/14/2023
Juan Rodrigo Walsh	Senior Advisor of Under Secretariat for Environment and Sustainable Development	Ministerio del Interior	2/1/2024

ANNEX C: PROJECT LOCATION

Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place





Please find Geo-referenced information in Roadmap section, annex Table GeoCode

ANNEX D: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS SCREEN AND RATING

(PIF level) Attach agency safeguard screen form including rating of risk types and overall risk rating.

Title

APN_Annex D_SSE

ANNEX E: RIO MARKERS

Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation	Biodiversity	Land Degradation
No Contribution 0	Significant Objective 1	Principal Objective 2	Significant Objective 1

ANNEX F: TAXONOMY WORKSHEET

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Influencing models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen institutional capacity and decision making. Convene multi-party alliances. Demonstrate innovative approaches. 		
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiaries: Local communities, civil society, and private sector. indigenous communities. Type of commitments: Knowledge and learning, involvement of stakeholders. 	Non governmental organization SMEs	
Capacity, Knowledge, and Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity development. Enabling activities. Generation of knowledge and exchanges. Applied research. Learnings. 	South-South Training	
Gender Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporation of gender equality- Gender mainstreaming 	Gender generation & exchange Gender sensitive indicators	
Focal Area / Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity. Forests Land degradation. Skills, knowledge, and research. Climate change. 	Sustainable Fire Management Ecosystems approach Drylands Climate change adaptation Ecosystems based adaptation Protected Areas & Landscape	

		Terrestrial Protected Areas	
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